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Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

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Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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II. Replies received from Governments
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98-32472 (E) 031198

Malta

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1. Guido de Marco, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta while addressing the General Assembly at its current session, stated that, "Like all other Mediterranean States, Malta views the problems of this region with particular concern. At the crossroads of cultures and civilizations, the Mediterranean is disproportionately burdened with turmoil, tension and conflict". He further underlined that

> "Resolution of each crisis demands positive action by the protagonists directly responsible. Yet, the world community can contribute through its efforts and good offices to construct an environment conducive to negotiated settlement. The bitter heritage of the past sometimes impedes that contact, which is an essential first step to the setting up of negotiating structures. In this effort to overcome obstacles, the international community and individual statesmen have given their fair share".

This is the manner in which Malta perceives the situation in the Mediterranean, as one where events continue to unfold but also as a region in which parallel initiatives continue to be promoted and take root.

2. Of major significance to the region has been the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, which was and continues to be a significant step in bringing together European and Mediterranean countries to comprehensively address the issues that still beleaguer the region.

3. One major development which is crucial to the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean is the incorporation of a parliamentary dimension. Malta continues to view the parliamentary process as a means of bringing the Euro-Mediterranean partnership closer to its people, thus enhancing understanding and tolerance in the region. Already in 1990, in Algiers during the Ministerial Conference of the Mediterranean Non-Aligned Countries, Mr. de Marco had proposed the creation of a council of the Mediterranean, which would bring together the parliamentarians of the political entities of the region, attending regular sessions, with a committee of ministers to monitor and direct the political, cultural and economic development of the Mediterranean.

4. At the Second Ministerial Conference of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, held in Malta in April 1997, ministers reaffirmed the importance they attached to the active involvement of parliaments in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. They also welcomed the fact that the "European Parliament has taken the initiatives with other parliaments to begin the Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary dialogue". The upcoming discussions initiated by the European Parliament regarding the setting up of a Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary dialogue will be crucial to that achievement. The preparatory meeting held in Malta at the end of May 1998 was aimed at exploring further ideas to activate, consolidate and develop the Barcelona process and to promote a parliamentary contribution to the process, and to the European Parliament as it embarks on that process. The Malta meeting took a number of decisions in the hope that the first Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum could lead to more substantive decisions concerning the future of the Forum.

5. It was during the Malta Euro-Mediterranean Conference that the Government of Malta proposed the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary partnership. In promoting the idea of a parliamentary partnership – a council for the Mediterranean – Malta has once again demonstrated its commitment to the principles of cooperation and dialogue. It is Malta's conviction that the consolidation of a permanent forum at the parliamentary level should help develop and reinforce political cooperation between peoples with so many different languages, cultures, religions and ideologies. In that context, Malta has offered its facilities to host such a Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary partnership in the belief that Malta's geo-strategic position could serve as a meeting place for the active involvement of parliaments in that partnership process, which would assist in bringing discussions closer to the Mediterranean peoples themselves. It is Malta's hope that such a proposal will meet the general acceptance of the partners in the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue.

6. Parallel to that development has been the initiative by Malta, at the Second Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean, held in Malta from 1 to 4 November 1995, to set up an association of Mediterranean States, open to all the Mediterranean coastal countries and to those countries whose destiny is directly linked to that Sea, according to modalities to be defined.

7. This idea was consequently followed up at the twelfth Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM), held in Windhoek on 8 April 1998, wherein a number of recommendations were made. One such recommendation involves action by national parliaments and Governments with regard to necessary follow-up on agreed measures

emanating from final documents and reports of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and the endorsement by parliaments of the conclusions and recommendations on the CSCM process. Another recommendation relates to the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and IPU on matters relating to the CSCM process and by which Governments would make written contributions to the consideration of the agenda item of the General Assembly concerning the strengthening of cooperation and security in the Mediterranean. It is Malta's hope that Governments will further exploit that recommendation during consideration of the item in the General Assembly concerning cooperation between the United Nations and IPU and during consideration of the item on strengthening security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, in the First Committee. Of relevance to the Organization is the third recommendation for the appointment and funding on a full-time basis of one staff member in the IPU secretariat to provide the necessary administrative support to the political process of the CSCM.

8. Within the United Nations, Malta has proposed the establishment of a Mediterranean desk in the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, which would, in Malta's view, facilitate contacts and assume a more direct role in the implementation of the provisions of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and decisions taken in other international and regional, if not subregional forums, where the Mediterranean dimension is the focal issue under consideration. The focus of such a desk should be on Mediterranean and regional initiatives as such and not on particular geographical considerations of the countries concerned.

9. The Government of Malta has always held that the undertaking of initiatives and the attainment of peace and stability in the Mediterranean should be dependent primarily on all the States of the region. At the same time, the United Nations should play a complementary role in the coordination of action, including the collating of information regarding developments in the region.

10. The flexible structure provided by the Mediterranean Forum is yet another example of how different structures can contribute to the building of confidence and trust. During the Ministerial meeting held in Palma de Mallorca, Spain, in April 1998, Malta assumed the Presidency of the Forum, and will be hosting the Mediterranean Forum Ministerial Meeting in 1999, as well as the preparatory meetings at the senior officials level.

11. Within the context of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Malta is committed to further enhancing the Mediterranean dimension. Ever since Dipoli, Malta has contributed to the OSCE process. It promoted the Mediterranean dimension of this process. Mediterranean and European security remain intimately and reciprocally linked. Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean is an important element for stability in the OSCE region. Consistent engagement by successive Maltese Governments have contributed towards the greater involvement of the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation in the work of the OSCE. Malta will continue to work to further that relationship.

12. For the third time, Malta was host to the OSCE Mediterranean Seminar, held from 19 to 20 October 1998. The theme of the Seminar, "The human dimension of security, promoting democracy and the rule of law", involved the broad participation of the OSCE community and a number of international organizations. In the words of Mr. de Marco at the opening of the Seminar, members present discussed "the mosaic that coagulates the rights of the individual and the responsibilities of the State, the rule of law as the golden thread which binds democracy to justice". Such principles are as much the domain of security, stability and confidence-building as are more often discussed issues related to military considerations.

13. The consolidation of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean rests also on initiatives where contacts between countries in the region may be fostered in diverse fields of activity. Malta was host in May 1998 to the regional seminar on textiles and clothing for Mediterranean States of the World Trade Organization. Other initiatives include the offer made by Malta to host, in February 1999, an OSCE regional environmental seminar as a means of further promoting security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region in all areas that can pose threats to security in the region, including marine environmental hazards and degradation. In October 1999, Malta will also be hosting, in collaboration with the Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan and the United Nations Environment Programme, the eleventh ordinary meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution and its protocols. On an ongoing basis, the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea, located in and hosted by Malta, organizes seminars and courses for countries in the region on matters of pollution prevention and control in case of a marine accident.

14. Within the context of disarmament, the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and the implementation of confidence-building measures among countries of the Mediterranean region can significantly increase security and

stability in the region. The Government of Malta will be hosting in 1999 a Mediterranean regional seminar on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention in collaboration with the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

15. The above are a number of initiatives which are under way in the Mediterranean region. As stated by Mr. de Marco, "Stability in the Mediterranean must rest on multiple initiatives that nurture cooperation through gradual confidence and security-building measures." It is in that context that he proposed to the General Assembly the need for the establishment of a stability pact for the region. It is one of the avenues which will require further follow-up and action as part of the international community's commitment to contributing to the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

16. Malta intends to continue to pursue and give priority attention to issues relating to the Mediterranean and strengthen its participation in all those processes that involve dialogue among countries of the region, and that promote activities and initiatives in those sectors and areas with the scope to strengthen peace, cooperation, dialogue and security in the region. The support and encouragement of the international community, in particular that of the States Members of the United Nations, is primordial in achieving those objectives.